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BEFORE THE
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20554

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

In the Matter of)
)
The Use of N11 Codes and Other)
Abbreviated Dialing Arrangements)

CC Docket No. 92-105

ORIGINAL
FILE

REPLY OF SOUTHWESTERN BELL TELEPHONE COMPANY

Southwestern Bell Telephone Company (SWBT) files its Reply in this docket. The general conclusion of the Comments filed herein is that assignment of N11 codes to individual customers for abbreviated dialing would not be in the public interest. SWBT urges the Commission to terminate this proceeding without sanctioning such assignment.

I. N11 CODES SHOULD NOT BE ASSIGNED FOR ABBREVIATED DIALING.

The majority of the commentors understand the importance of preserving N11 codes for World Zone 1¹ public service applications. Several potential applications have been suggested: time and temperature, utility information, school information, handicapped access, and local public transportation.² Because of historical N11 assignment policies, it has been possible to deploy such applications on virtually a nationwide basis. For example, emergency 911 service is essentially available on a nationwide basis due to these policies. However, if N11 codes were allowed to

¹ World Zone 1 includes the United States, Canada, Bermuda, Puerto Rico and other Caribbean Basin islands.

² Other potential nationwide uses, such as emergency access to public works departments, library services, and services for the blind, are also possible. See, p. 5, infra.

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be assigned to individual customers for abbreviated dialing, it would be virtually impossible to continue to develop nationwide applications of the same value as those currently serving the public interest.

Options, other than abbreviated dialing, currently exist which facilitate the end user's ability to access an Enhanced Service Provider (ESP). For example, speed calling, which provides expedited access to an ESP, is available through various ONA (Open Network Architecture) plans or through customer premises equipment (CPE). Other options which provide "easy to remember" dialing are: information lines (e.g., 976) developed for the purpose for which Cox is seeking an N11 code; Feature Group B (950 service), which provides customers with a national 7-digit telephone number; and the 900 Service Access Code (SAC), which is currently used for access to information services. The 900 SAC makes available approximately *eight million* national addresses for such services.

Even discounting the other flaws in the N11 proposal, technical limitations could hamper and limit the assignment of N11 codes for abbreviated dialing, absent costly upgrades to the network. GTE, for example, has stated that it has a significant number of switches that would require substantial upgrading and other modifications to record and bill calls using N11 access.³ Similar problems may also exist in other LEC networks.⁴

³ GTE, pp. 4-5.

⁴ U S West, p. 16; Puerto Rico Telephone Company, p. 4; USTA, pp. 16-18.

The administration of N11 code assignment would boil with complexity and contention. For example, the Newspaper Association of America (NAA) states that it does not care which assignment method is employed, as long as "Cox will be assured of an N11 code."⁵ If, however, the Commission should endorse the Cox proposal--that N11 codes be assigned on a first come, first served basis⁶--Cox would benefit only in those instances in which it was the first to ask for a code. LO/AD Communications, on the other hand, has proposed a complex, multi-layered assignment process which includes consideration of (1) technical, managerial and financial resources, (2) ability of the applicant, (3) experience of the applicant, (4) the order in which the requests were filed, and (5) adherence to an industry set of guidelines relating to costs, sponsor identification, clear and fair advertising, value for price, legal and ethical content, and the protection of minors.⁷ Such a complicated and subjective assignment process would almost surely invite claims of unfairness and discrimination.

Several commentators have opposed LEC participation in the assignment process. Comments of the Information Technology Association of America (ITAA) illustrate the vehemence with which some oppose any process that could be perceived as even mildly beneficial to a LEC.⁸ SWBT, as it has stated before, opposes the

⁵ NAA, p. 4.

⁶ Cox Cable, pp. 12-14.

⁷ LO/AD Communications, p. 3.

⁸ ITAA, p. 5.

assignment of N11 codes for abbreviated dialing. If, however, the Commission insists on pursuing such a misguided policy, SWBT strongly opposes LEC participation in the code assignment process--to avoid situations that would invite spurious allegations such as those made by ITAA.

MCI has stated that N11 codes should be used for national applications.⁹ However, if the Commission limits assignment of N11 codes to nationwide providers, as MCI suggests, many problems will remain. Although N11 codes are not Numbering Plan Area (NPA) codes, the assignment of an N11 code on a nationwide basis to a single subscriber would be the equivalent of assigning an NPA code to that entity. Such an assignment could potentially remove the 7.92 million available telephone numbers in an NPA from the public switched network. In addition, SWBT continues to believe that the Commission would be hard-pressed, because of the appeal of 3-digit dialing, to limit assignment only to N11 codes. Thus, catastrophic results for the NANP could occur. Further, because an N11 code could be required for assignment as an NPA code before interchangeable NPAs are introduced in 1995, conservation of N11 codes should continue to be a high priority.

Any claim that assignment of N11 codes to individual customers would be in the public interest is thus untenable. Those seeking N11 codes are merely seeking a personal benefit, nothing more. This is why Cox, for example, proposes that if N11 codes are assigned, the assignees should be allowed to use them for any

⁹ MCI, pp. 4-5.

lawful, privately beneficial service.¹⁰ Though Cox acknowledges the necessity of a uniform numbering policy,¹¹ Cox's proposal to assign N11 codes would, by creating more public confusion than benefit, make a uniform numbering policy impossible.

SWBT is concerned that N11 codes, if assigned to individual customers, could be used inappropriately. As US Sprint has pointed out, N11 codes could be used to avoid LEC access charges.¹² USTA notes similar concerns and points out that codes used in this fashion could undermine universal service support goals by evading support payments.¹³ SWBT agrees with and shares these concerns.

N11 codes should continue to be used for their original purposes--public service. The 411 and 911 codes are recognized nationally for directory assistance and emergency service. Some other possible nationwide uses of N11 codes could include: 211, associating "B" with special services for the blind; 311, associating "E" with emergency access to public works departments; and 511, associating "L" with library access. These codes could be available in all networks and could easily be remembered by all users. Additionally, with these applications, the codes would be available to multiple subscribers and would be nationally available

¹⁰ Cox, p. 2.

¹¹ Cox, p. 9.

¹² US Sprint, p. 3.

¹³ USTA, pp. 21-22.

to the general public, thereby providing the maximum public benefit for the use of N11 codes.

II. OTHER COURSES OF ACTION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED

SWBT and most all other commentors, including Local Exchange Carriers (LECs), Interexchange Carriers (IXCs), industry groups and others, have urged the Commission not to sanction the assignment of N11 codes as proposed in the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM). Thus, SWBT urges the Commission to terminate this proceeding and not sanction the assignment of N11 codes for abbreviated dialing. However, if the Commission still wishes to explore the issues surrounding abbreviated dialing, more information and time will be needed. Several parties have suggested alternatives to abbreviated dialing arrangements--some of which include 555-XXXX, N11-XXXX, N11#, NXX#, options using * or # followed by some number of digits, and gateway applications. Of these alternatives, 555-XXXX appears to have the most to offer but will still require more research and cannot be fully evaluated without more fact finding or within the time constraints of this docket.

Also, the Commission could direct these issues to the industry for resolution; for example, to the Information Industry Liaison Committee (IILC), which already is considering a request to review abbreviated dialing alternatives, or to the Industry Carriers Compatibility Forum (ICCF). If the Commission does not endorse the above suggestions and wishes to continue pursuing the abbreviated dialing issue, through a formal Commission proceeding,

SWBT urges the Commission to issue a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRM) to fully review possible alternatives to the use of N11 codes for abbreviated dialing arrangements. The public interest will be better served by a full discussion of all relevant points of view rather than by a hasty sanction of the assignment of N11 codes to individual customers.


III. CONCLUSION

For the reasons discussed above and in SWBT's Comments, SWBT urges the Commission to terminate this proceeding without sanctioning the assignment of N11 codes for abbreviated dialing. Most other commentors also urge the Commission not to sanction the assignment of N11 codes. However, if the Commission still wants to address abbreviated dialing, given all of the comments in opposition to the proposal and the possible alternatives which may better serve the public interest, it should do so in another forum. SWBT would, under such circumstances, urge the Commission either to (1) direct the issue to the industry for review and resolution; or

(2) issue an FNPRM to specifically review alternatives to the use of N11 codes for abbreviated dialing arrangements.

Respectfully submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Pat Young, hereby certify that the foregoing
"Reply of Southwestern Bell Telephone Company" in Docket No. 92-
105 has been served this 13th day of July, 1992 to the Parties of
Record.


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